

از الذين عند الله الاسلام

# The Muslim Sunrise

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The Pope and the World's Needy  
Meeting Grounds for Science and Religion

Islam: Its Message

The Nature of Quran

Islam and Jihad

Some Observations by Western Historians

Science on the Shroud of Turin

Human Element in the Bible

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## **THE MUSLIM SUNRISE**

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Editor: Khalil Ahmad Nasir, Ph.D.

All correspondence in regards to the subject matter or contents of the Muslim Sunrise may be directly addressed to: Dr. Khalil A. Nasir, 30 Somerset Place, Syosset, L.I., N.Y. 11791

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## EDITORIAL

## THE POPE AND THE WORLD'S NEEDY

Pope John Paul II's journey to the United States in October 1979 was truly one of the most important visits by the world dignitaries to the shores of this country. During that historic week, the spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Church addressed millions of people. In his speeches, he discussed not only the issues particularly concerning the Catholic Dogma but also some of the most urgent problems of the contemporary world.

By far the most important address by the Pope dealing with the current global crisis was delivered on October 2, when he appeared before the General Assembly of the United Nations. Describing it as the "supreme forum for the international life of humanity today", the Pope hailed the Charter of the world organization as "a milestone on the long and difficult path of the human race" and praised its activities in such fields as health, food, labor and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

From the most urgent issues threatening the future of the world, the Pope particularly chose to direct the attention of the world to the question of the proliferation of arms and even more forcefully the problem of the distribution of material goods.<sup>1</sup>

We sincerely hope that Pope John Paul's plea for the world's needy will not fall on deaf ears. The future of the mankind will be indeed very uncertain and dark if the world leaders do not start to take positive, effective and substantial steps in this direction.

The Pope said:

"The first of these systematic threats against human rights is linked in an overall sense with the distribution of material goods. This distribution is frequently unjust, both within individual societies and on the planet

as a whole. Everyone knows that these goods are given to men not only as nature's bounty. They are enjoyed by him chiefly as the fruit of his activities ranging from the simplest manual and physical labor to the most complicated forms of industrial production and to the highly qualified and specialized research and study. Various forms of inequality in the possession of material goods and the enjoyment of them can often be explained by different historical and cultural causes and circumstances. But while these circumstances can diminish the moral responsibility of people today, they do not prevent the situations of inequality from being marked by injustice and social injury."

Later, he observed:

"It can be—and indeed it must be—the humanistic criterion, namely the measure in which each system is really capable of reducing, restraining and eliminating, as far as possible, the various forms of exploitation of man, and of insuring for him through work not only the just distribution of the indispensable material goods, but also a participation, in keeping with his dignity, in the whole process of production and in the social life that grows up around the process."

Within a few days after the Pope's address to the General Assembly of the United Nations, President Fidel Castro of Cuba also focussed the attention of this august body to the same problem—of our neglected responsibilities towards the poor people and poor nations. He said:

"It is imperative to do away with the enormous inequality that separates the developed from the developing countries.... We aspire to a new world order—one based on justice, on equality and peace, one that will replace the unjust and unequal system that prevails today."

President Castro asked for a new fund of \$300 billion to

be contributed by the rich countries during the next ten years for the development of the poor. "We are requesting," he said, "less for ten years of development than is spent in a single year by the ministries of war."

The search for a system to eliminate all social and economic inequalities is certainly a vital need of mankind.

Almost fourteen centuries ago, a prophetic voice was raised in the wilderness of Arabia. For all times to come it exhorted the mankind to hearken the divine message which offers a perfect and rational solution to this affliction of economic disparity between one class and the other. Islam's answer is based upon the fundamental truth that to God alone belongs the absolute ownership of everything. As the Holy Quran says:

*"Dost thou know not that the kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah alone."*<sup>2</sup>

And:

*"To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; and Allah has power over all things."*<sup>3</sup>

Once the principle of the Lord's ownership is accepted, the Quran explains that man is but His vicegerent on earth. "Whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth"<sup>4</sup> is subjected to his service. Therefore, whoever fails to recognize his dignity and to act accordingly shall be answerable for his neglect.<sup>5</sup>

The logical conclusion of the foregoing premises as explained by the Holy Quran is that while the legal ownership—the right of possession, enjoyment and transfer of property—is recognized and safeguarded for the individual, but it is subject to the provision that in all of Allah's bounties, all sections of society have a right to share.<sup>6</sup>

It is eminently clear that an adequate and equitable distribution of the material resources can be possible only after the acceptance of these self-evident truths. Islam recognizes the obvious diversity of human capacities result-

ing into diversity in earnings and material rewards. It rejects unconditional equality in the distribution of wealth. One must be entitled to the fruits of his endeavors and proper application of his talents. Depriving him of the reward of his toils will tend to kill all incentive and severely affect production and progress.

On the basis of these principles, Islam introduces the institution of *Zakat* as the means towards an effective and proper distribution of wealth. The word *Zakat* literally means "that which purifies" and "that which fosters".

The concept of *Zakat* rests upon the principle that wealth is produced by the application of man's skill and labor to the resources which God has provided for man's subsistence and comfort and over part of which man enjoys property rights, to the extent recognized by Islam.<sup>7</sup> In other words, there should be a share not only for the worker and the capital but also for the community. The Holy Prophet made it eminently clear that the *Zakat* is "a levy imposed upon the well-to-do which is returned to the poorer sections of the people."<sup>8</sup> Islam, therefore, declares it as an obligatory tax which the needy receive not as a 'hand-out' but as their due.

Through *Zakat* and other institutions such as the wide distribution of the property of the deceased, Islam offers practical means of the distribution of the natural resources. If these injunctions can be properly applied around the world, the disastrous consequences of the present disparities between the "haves" and "have-nots" can be effectively checked. Only a day before the Pope's address to the United Nations, World Bank President, Robert McNamara, illustrated the terrifying plight of the overwhelming numbers of the world's destitute and the poor people in very graphic terms before the joint annual meeting of the World's Bank and the International Monetary Fund held in Belgrade. He noted that 800 million people live in "absolute

poverty" and that more than 30 million children under 5 years of age starved to death in 1978. The Pope spoke of "the frightful disparities between the excessively rich individuals and groups on the one hand; on the other hand, the majority made up of the poor or, indeed, of the destitute who lack food and opportunity for work and education and are in great numbers condemned to hunger and diseases."<sup>9</sup>

It is gratifying to us that the Pope has brought this problem to the world's attention. Let us hope that the world will receive, embrace and act upon its remedy given to mankind through divine guidance fourteen hundred years ago.

*Khalil Nasir*

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Footnotes:

1. Full text of Pope John Paul II's address to the General Assembly of the United Nations is available through several publications, e.g., *The New York Times*, October 3, 1979.

2. *Al-Baqarah*: 108.

3. *Al-Imran*: 190.

4. *Al-Jathiyah*: 14.

5. *Al-Fatir*: 40.

6. *Al-Dhariyat*: 20.

7. Khan, Muhammad Zafrullah, *Islam and the Human Rights*, 1967. London. The London Mosque, pp. 50-51.

8. *Bukhari I*, Sect: Zakat, Chapter: Obligation of Zakat.

9. *The New York Times*, October 3, 1979.



## MEETING GROUND FOR SCIENCE AND RELIGION

For more than a century, many scholars around the globe have continued to believe and advocate the idea that religion and scientific knowledge cannot be harmonized. They assumed that while religion is based on blind faith and an irrational reliance on the supernatural, science alone leads to the real truth through reason and systematically varified data.

The world has now entered a new and challenging era. On the one hand, the scientists are realizing that the universe is far too complex to run so harmoniously without the hand of the Providence. On the other, the theologians of the world have also started to admit that the age of science and technology poses a challenge to the religionist that must be confronted. Rapidly expanding fields of science and technology have spawned extremely profound and complex delimmas to the spiritual world. Religious leaders must face the question: How can religion be made relevant in the modern, technological, scientific age? Is it possible for the scientists and religionists to work together and find common solutions of today's problems?

It is gratifying to learn that an international conference was recently held on *Faith, Science and the Future* in Cambridge, Massachussetts, in the summer of 1979. The *Christian Science Monitor* (July 31, 1979) described it as a "trailblazer" of sorts. The fact that as many as 900 scientists, theologians, and observers from all over the world attended this extraordinary conference indicated that there is a growing and increasingly keen desire among the scholars to meet the greatest challenge of our times. The religionists and scientists are increasingly anxious to work together and grapple with the burning issue of exploring the common bonds between science and religion.

Both scientists and theologians called in this conference for new view of reality. As the biologist Charles Birch

pointed out, "Mind is no longer just a corner of nature. It is part of all nature." Theologian Paul Gregorios drew some meaningful similarities between faith and science. Challenging the natural scientists to develop a new world in which man and universe are interrelated, Dr. Gregorios urged a concept of faith that that is "not so much an emotional-intellectual commitment of the will to someone who stands over against you, as an allowing oneself to be trustingly carried, nourished, supported, by God, and the consequent strengthening and transformation of human personality and society." (*Monitor*, July 31, 1979).

The conference, which was sponsored by the interdenominational World Council of Churches, recognized that the "Western thought, both in religion and science, commonly has divided reality into 'dualisms' of subject and object, matter and spirit, knowledge and belief, intellect and intuition" (*Newsday*, August 11, 1979). In sharp contrast to this view, this conference stressed the interrelationship between humanity and nature. A report issued by the organizers of the conference stated that "humanity and nonhuman creation ... remain intimately bound in an open-ended history. Persons share with the whole of creation in the ultimate purposes which God has for it.

In this context one finds the observations of theologian Donald Shriver of New York's Union Theological Seminary highly significant. He called for the weaving of theology and nature a "new and astonishing note, difficult, challenging and inviting."

*The New York Times* (July 31, 1979) reported that "many speakers in this conference voiced suspicion and antipathy toward science, reflecting the belief that technological 'progress' has resulted in new forms of exploitation. Dr. Phillip Potter, general secretary of the council, described science as captive to political and economic interests."

Islam has repeatedly and emphatically emphasized that there is no conflict between reason and faith, between the word and the work of God, between religion and science. It has declared that all research into the past and every discovery and invention in the future will affirm its truth (*The Holy Quran*, 41:43). It seeks to reach every type of understanding, through parables, similitudes, arguments, reasoning, the observation and study of nature, and the natural and spiritual laws (*The Holy Quran*, 18:55, 39:28, 59:22).

The Quran not only urges observation and reflection, the exercise of reason, and understanding (22:270), but it also emphasizes that from our reflection upon the phenomena of nature, we may be enabled to grasp the Truth and to understand the operation of Divine attributes and of Divine Laws. Islam does not accept the notion that there can be any contradiction between the Word and Work of God.

Recently a valuable contribution of far-reaching impact toward understanding of harmony in the laws of nature has been made by the "Salam-Weinberg theory" developed by the world-renowned physicist, Dr. Abdus Salam, an eminent member of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, and Dr. Steven Weinberg. It has been further strengthened by the findings of Dr. Sheldon Glashow. This theory is, as *Newsweek* (October 29, 1979) described, "their most agonizing quest" that "defeated even Einstein". It endeavors to find the principle that unites gravity, electromagnetism, and the weak and strong nuclear forces, the four fundamental forces in nature. The research of these great scientists has won them the much coveted Nobel Prize for Physics for 1979.

Professor Abdus Salam, when asked by the press to give his reactions on being nominated for this great honor, offered all praise to Allah, the Creator of all universes, Who

(continued on page 51)

## ISLAM: ITS MESSAGE

By

Muhammad Zafrulla Khan

Former President, International Court of Justice

[Being the text of a speech delivered in the Religios Studies Department of the University of Calgary, Canada, in October, 1979.]

Of the great world faiths, Islam is unique in several respects. It is the only one that does not rely on any myth or mystery. It is based upon the certainty of proved and acknowledged fact. Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, peace be on him, was a historical figure, and lived his life in the full light of day. The revelation vouchsafed to him, over a period of twenty-two years, has been fully safeguarded, in the Holy Quran, according to the Divine promise set out in the Quran itself: *Surely We Ourself have sent down this Exhortation, and We will, most surely, safeguard it* (15:10). This comprises several aspects:

One, the text of the revelation has been preserved in its purity and entirety for all time. Even Western scholars, who do not accept the Quran as Divine revelation, affirm that it is word for word that which Muhammad gave out to the world as Divine revelation.

Two, classical Arabic, the language in which the revelation was sent, has continued to be in use as a living language. It is today understood and used as a means of communication over much vaster areas of the earth and by many hundred times more people, than was the case in the time of the Prophet.

These two factors, so essential for the safeguarding of the guidance contained in the revelation, could not have been assured by the Prophet in advance.

But life is dynamic, and the pattern of human life is subject to constant change. Besides, history testifies that

the passage of time brings about a decline in spiritual and moral values. It was inevitable, therefore, that over the centuries there should have been a falling off in the true appreciation of Divine guidance set forth in Divine revelation as applicable to contemporary conditions and situations. The complete safeguarding of the Divine revelation thus necessitated a constant process of spiritual revival and rebirth. In the nature of things this could also come about only through revelation. It was announced by the Prophet that to meet this need God would continue to raise from among the Muslims, at the beginning of each century, someone who would be inspired to revive the faith by drawing attention to the guidance contained in the Quran apposite to current condition. History has confirmed the truth of this assurance conveyed by the Prophet.

The last century has, however, witnessed the onset of a tremendous revolution in human values in all spheres of life. Standards that had been accepted and subscribed to through centuries are undergoing extensive revision and modification. The very dimensions of human life are being reshaped, so that scholars and thinkers are beginning to stress the need of a new revelation. Yet, the Quran is quite clear that the guidance contained therein would prove adequate during all stages at all times.

To meet this contingency the Quran had announced that the Prophet had not only been raised in the generation among whom he lived, but would also be raised among others who had not yet joined them (62:3-4). This meant a spiritual second advent of the Prophet for the purpose of setting forth from the Quran guidance that may be needed in the new age, and for illustrating the values demanded by the exigencies with which man may then be faced. This promise has been fulfilled in the advent of Ahmad, of Qadian (1835-1908), who warned that mankind stood at the threshold of an era which would bear the same relation

to his age, that is, the beginning of the twentieth century, as the beginning of that century bore to the days of Adam, and who proceeded to set forth from the Quran, in the light of revelation vouchsafed to him, the guidance that mankind now desperately needs.

Thus, Islam comprises within itself the means of its own revival, not merely through normal interpretation, but also through the light of revelation, vouchsafed by the Divine to His elect through the ages. In this context it needs to be remembered that the whole of the Quran from beginning to end is verbal revelation, and is thus literally the word of God. As such, it possesses a dynamic quality and is many-faceted. It is as dynamic as the universe which is the work of God. This assures a complete accord, throughout, between the Quran and the universe. That is why in Islam there has been no conflict between science and religion.

The Quran teaches that God has, at all stages, furnished guidance to mankind through revelation vouchsafed to the Prophets. It requires faith in all previous Prophets, so that all of them are believed in and revered by the Muslims. It points out, however, that previous revelations were limited in their scope. Each was designed to meet the needs of the people to whom it was sent during the stage of development upon which that people was about to enter. Each contained fundamental truths, valid through the ages, in respect of the whole of mankind, but it also contained guidance, directions, commandments, and prohibitions which were of a local or temporary character. Moreover, in course of time, portions of the revelations were lost or forgotten or perverted. That which was of universal and permanent application in previous revelations, has been reaffirmed in the Quran. Such portions as had been lost or were overlooked or forgotten, but were still needed, have been revived. That which was of purely local or temporary application and was no longer needed has been omitted.

That which was not contained in previous revelations, the need for it not having arisen, but which would henceforth be needed by mankind, has been added (2:107, 3:8).

Not only are today's versions of previous revelations open to serious question on the score of authenticity of the text and accuracy of translation and interpretation; many of the details concerning the commandments and ordinances and even doctrines which were of a temporary or local character, are now out of date or inapplicable. Today's doctrine is also in many cases based on subsequent interpretation and formulation, which appear to have little connection with what was contained in the revelation and even contradict it. Attention is drawn to all this in the Quran.

The Quran expounds and explains all that is or may be needed by mankind for the complete fulfilment of life (16:90). It seeks to create faith in God through rehearsal of God's Signs; it makes provision for mankind's welfare, material, moral, and spiritual; it teaches all that is needed for the beneficent regulation of human life and expounds the philosophy underlying it, so that reason being satisfied, wholehearted conformity to what is taught is assured (62:2-3). It expounds the necessity of establishing and maintaining communion with God. It draws attention to Divine attributes, their operation and the manner in which mankind may derive benefit from the knowledge thereof. In short, all that is basic for the promotion of human welfare in all spheres, whether pertaining to principles or conduct, is set forth and expounded (16:90).

It is not possible to set forth at any time the whole meaning and interpretation of the Quran or, indeed, of any portion of it, with finality. It yields new truths and fresh guidance in every age and at every level. It is a standing and perpetual (18:110). The universe is dynamic and so is the Quran. Indeed, so dynamic is the Quran that it has

always been found to keep ahead of the world and never to lag behind it. However fast the pace at which the pattern of human life may change and evolve, the Quran always yields, and will go on yielding, needed guidance in advance. This has now been demonstrated through fourteen centuries and that is a guarantee that it will continue to be demonstrated through the ages.

The Quran has proclaimed that falsehood will never overtake it. All research into the past and every discovery and invention in the future will affirm its truth (41:43). The Quran speaks at every level; it seeks to reach every type of understanding, through parables, similitudes, arguments, reasoning, the observation and study of the phenomena of nature, and the natural, moral and spiritual laws (18:55; 39:28; 59:22).

The Quran reasons from the physical and tangible to the spiritual and intangible. It repeatedly urges observation and reflection, the exercise of reason and understanding (3:191-192; 22:270).

With all this, man is left to his free choice and acceptance of the truth.

Faith is not commanded on the basis of authority, but is invited on the basis of understanding (12:109).

*"This is a Book that We have revealed to thee, full of blessings, that they may reflect over its verses, and that those gifted with understanding may take heed."*  
(38:30).

There is complete freedom to believe or to deny, as is said:

*"There shall be no compulsion in religion, for guidance and error have been clearly distinguished."*  
(2:257).

And again:

*"Proclaim, O Prophet: It is the truth from your Lord; wherefore, let him who will, believe, and let him*



*who will, disbelieve.*" (18:30).

But of course, though the choice is free, the consequences of the choice follow in accordance with Divine law. No one is forced. Everyone must choose and seek the purpose of his life on the basis of faith, or turn his back on the truth and destroy his soul, according to his choice.

It has sometimes been suggested that belief in Divine revelation, and acceptance of revealed truth, tend towards intellectual rigidity and narrowness. The exact reverse is the truth. Revelation stimulates the intellect and opens all manner of avenues for research and expansion of knowledge. The constant and repeated exhortation to reflect upon and ponder every type of natural phenomenon, with which the Quran abounds, is an express urge in that direction. History furnishes incontrovertible proof of this. Within an astonishingly brief period following the revelation of the Quran, darkness and confusion were dispelled over vast areas of the earth, order was established, all manner of beneficent institutions sprang into life, a high moral order was set up, and the blessings of knowledge, learning, and science began to be widely diffused. Human intellect, which for some centuries had been almost frozen into inactivity, experienced a sudden release and upsurge, and the world experienced an astounding revolution, material, moral and spiritual. It fulfilled to a pre-eminent degree the needs and yearnings of the human body, intellect, and soul. It changed the course of human history. It flung wide open the gates of knowledge and progress in all directions. Its impact continues to be felt today through many and diverse channels.

One of many characteristics of the Quran which marks it as the Word of God is that to arrive at the comprehension of its deeper meaning and significance, the seeker must, in addition to a certain degree of knowledge of the language and the principles of interpretation, cultivate purity of

thought and action. The greater the purity of a person's life the deeper and wider will be his comprehension of the meaning of the Quran (56:80).

This comprehensive message was conveyed in verbal revelation to the Holy Prophet of Islam over a period of approximately twenty-two years (610-632 A.D.), and every aspect of it was illustrated by the Holy Prophet in his own life. He has been described in the Holy Quran as an excellent exemplar (33:22). Also, he was commanded to announce:

*"If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will then love you and forgive you your faults. Allah is Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful."* (3:32).

This necessitated that his life should be lived in the light of day and that a full account of it should become available. It was also necessary that his life should be multi-faceted, in the sense that he should be called upon to fill a diversity of roles, and that he should fill them to perfection. He was born in Mecca in 570 and lived through the first third of the seventh century. A full and detailed account of his life has come down to us and is open for study and research by seekers after truth. All this could not have been contrived by the Holy Prophet on his own. At every stage and at every step of his life, the hand of God was clearly visible as Protector, Guide and Helper.

All the authorities agree in ascribing to youth of Muhammad a modesty of deportment and purity of manners rare among the people of contemporary Mecca. It was quite in keeping with his character that he should have shrunk from the coarse and licentious practices of his youthful compatriots. Endowed with a refined mind and delicate taste, reserved and meditative, he lived much within himself, and the ponderings of his heart supplied occupation for leisure hours spent by others of a lower stamp in rude sports and profligacy. The fair character and honorable bearing of the unobtrusive youth won the approbation of his fellow

citizens; and by common consent, he received the title *Al-Ameen*, meaning The Faithful. After the Divine call came to him, and his message was treated with ridicule and suspicion, he was urged by God to challenge his opponents in the words:

*"I have spent a whole lifetime among you before this; will you not then understand."* (10:17).

Not even his bitterest enemy could point to a single incident in his previous life to which exception could have been taken.

As years passed, Muhammad spent more and more time in contemplation and meditation. He possessed a sensitive mind and a grave and serene disposition. He felt keenly the distress of every fellow being, and reacted very sharply to it, affording such relief and assistance as lay within his power.

That which affected his mind most deeply and painfully, however, was the moral and spiritual decline into which his people had fallen, and from which he could see no way of rescuing them, save through Divine guidance and help. For the purpose of communing with himself and imploring light and guidance of the Supreme Being concerning the problems that troubled his mind and soul, he formed the habit of retiring for several days at a time to one of the hills a few miles out of Mecca. There he occupied himself in prayer and contemplation. Taking with him a modest supply of dates and water, he would spend his days and nights in self-examination, in reflecting on the problems that troubled him, and in prayer and supplication to God. There is no record of the struggle that went on in his soul during this period of retreat. In the nature of things, it is not granted to any of us to probe into the depths of another's soul, to appraise accurately and completely its travail and its ecstasies. That is a holy secret between each individual and his Maker. Those years were, however, years

of preparation, when Muhammad's soul was being deepened and proved and made ready for the heavy responsibility that the Divine will had decreed should be placed on him.

Concerning Moses, God has said in the Quran:

*"I wrapped thee with love from Me, and this I did that thou mightest be reared before My eye ... We proved thee in various ways ... then thou camest up to the standard, O Moses, and I chose thee for Myself."* (20:40-42).

As with Moses, so with Muhammad. He is reminded of this in the Quran:

*"Did He not find thee an orphan and take thee under His protection? Did He not find thee perplexed in search of Him and guide thee unto Himself? Did He not find thee in want and provide thee with abundance?"* (93:7-9).

Muhammad was forty years old when the Divine Call came to him in his retreat on Mount Hira, to which he was in the habit of repairing for prayer and contemplation. Was the time ripe for comprehensive Divine guidance for the whole of mankind? History bears out that this was the darkest period of the Dark Ages. There was a faint glimmer of light, here and there, but on the whole, mankind was bereft almost entirely of spiritual light. The light and the guidance needed were supplied through Muhammad.

Pringle Kennedy has observed:

"Muhammad was, to use a striking expression, the man of the hour. In order to understand his wonderful success, one must study the conditions of his times. Five and a half centuries and more had elapsed when he was born since Jesus had come into the world. At that time, the old religions of Greece and Rome, and of the hundred and one states along the Mediterranean, had lost their vitality. In their place, Caesarism had come as a living cult. The worship of the state as

personified by the reigning Caesar, such was the religion of the Roman Empire. ... But Caesarism failed to satisfy. The Eastern religions and superstitions (Egyptian, Syrian, Persian) appealed to many in the Roman world and found numerous votaries. The fatal fault of many of these creeds was that in many respects they were so ignoble. ... When Christianity conquered Caesarism at the commencement of the fourth century, it, in its turn, became Caesarised. No longer was it the pure creed which had been taught some three centuries before. It had become largely de-spiritualised, titualised, materialised. (*Arabian Society at the time of Muhammad*, pp. 8-10).

"How, in a few years, all this was changed, how, by 650 A.D. a great part of this world became a different world from what it had been before is one of the most remarkable chapters in human history. ... This wonderful change followed, if it was not mainly caused by, the life of one man, the Prophet of Mecca. ... Whatever the opinion one may have of this extraordinary man, whether it be that of the devout Muslim who considers him the last and the greatest herald of God's word, or of the fanatical Christians of former days, who considered him an emissary of the Evil one, or of certain modern Orientalists, who look on him rather as a politician than a saint, as an organizer of Asia in general and Arabia in particular, against Europe, rather as a religious reformer; there can be no difference as to the immensity of the effect which his life has had on the history of the world. To those of us, to whom the man is everything, the milieu but little, he is the supreme instance of what can be done by one man. Even others who hold that the conditions of time and place, the surroundings of every sort, the capacity of receptivity of the human

mind, have, more than an individual effort, brought about the great steps in the world's history cannot well deny, that even if this step were to come, without Muhammad it would have been indefinitely delayed. (ibid, pp. 18-21).

"In the fifth and sixth centuries, the civilized world stood on the verge of chaos. The old emotional cultures that had made civilization possible, since they had given to man a sense of unity and of reverence for their rulers, had broken down, and nothing had been found adequate to take their place ... It seemed then that the great civilization which had taken four thousand years to construct was on the verge of disintegration, and that mankind was likely to return to that condition of barbarism where every tribe and sect was against the next, and law and order were unknown ... The new sanctions created by Christianity were creating divisions and destruction instead of unity and order ... Civilization like a gigantic tree whose foliage had over-reached the world ... stood tottering ... rotted to the core... Was there any emotional culture that could be brought in to gather mankind once more to unity and save civilization? ... It was among the Arabs that the man was born who was to unite the whole known world of the east and the south (J.H. Denison, *Emotions as the Basis of Civilization*; pp. 265-269).

"Muhammad appeared on the scene at one of the darkest periods in all history, when all the civilizations, from Merovinician Gaul to India, were falling to ruin or were in a state of troubled gestation." (L. Dermenghem, *The Life of Mahomet*, p. 171).

"If the object of religion be the inculcation of morals, the diminution of evil, the promotion of human happiness, the expansion of the human intellect, if the performance of good works will avail in the great day when mankind shall be summoned to its

final reckoning, it is neither irreverent nor unreasonable to admit that Muhammad was indeed an Apostle of God." (S. P. Scott, *History of the Moorish Empire in Europe*, p. 126).

"Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may ask, is there any man greater than he." (Lamartine, *History of Turkey*, p. 276).

"The more one reflects on the history of Muhammad and of early Islam, the more one is amazed at the vastness of his achievement. Circumstances presented him with an opportunity such as few men have had, but the man was fully matched with the hour. Had it not been for his gifts as seer, statesman, and administrator, and behind these his trust in God and firm belief that God had sent him, a notable chapter in the history of mankind would have remained unwritten." (W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, p. 335).

Thus it is clear that the state of the world, at the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet, called loudly for universal and comprehensive divine guidance, to be sent forth in God's words, and to be illustrated by a Messenger whose life would be multifaceted and who would serve as an exemplar for mankind. Such was Muhammad. Another very striking factor in his support is that no one else, even remotely approaching his stature and his qualities, appeared to guide mankind at the time of its greatest need. The conclusion is irresistible that he was beyond doubt the pre-determined instrument of God for the revival of mankind.

The very name of the great faith ushered in through Muhammad, was bestowed by God, as is affirmed by the

**Holy Quran:**

*"This day have I perfected your religion for your benefit, and have completed My favor unto you, and have chosen for you Islam as your faith."* (5:4).

This divinely chosen name summarizes the message of the faith. The word Islam means peace and submission, that is to say, the attainment of peace through submission to and conformity with the will of God. This is another one of the many unique features of Islam. No other faith can boast of it, or of anything resembling it.

The basic fundamental doctrine of Islam is the Unity of God. Islam stands uncompromisingly on it, and does not tolerate anything that might conflict with it. The credo of Islam is: There is no god besides Allah; Muhammad is His Messenger. The late Pope, Paul IV, in his very first encyclical, expressed his admiration of the upholding of the Unity of God by Islam. Everything in Islam stems from and revolves around the Unity of God.

Islam inculcates faith in God's angels, His Books, His Messengers, life after death, and His determination of good and evil. It requires faith in all God's Messengers. Some of them are named in the Holy Quran; for instance, Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus and others. The Torah and the Gospel are referred to as containing guidance and light.

The Quran stresses unity, diversity and orderliness of the universe, and the unity and equality of man. It affirms that the universe is bound by law, and so bound, is placed at the service of man. This affirmation threw wide open the gates of every type of knowledge; so that there is no possibility in Islam of the so-called conflict between science and religion. According to Islam science is the hand-maiden of religion.

Islam teaches the equality of man. No individual or group enjoys any privilege in Islam, as is said in the Holy



Quran:

*"O, mankind, We have created you from male and female; and We have divided you into tribes and clans for greater facility of intercourse. Verily, the most honored among you in the estimation of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware."* (49:14).

The Holy Prophet has said: An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab; nor is a white one superior to a colored one, nor a colored one to a white one. Islam has never had a race or color problem.

The following may be cited as instances of the moral exhortations of Islam:

*"O ye who believe, let no people deride another people, haply they may be better than themselves, nor one group of women deride another, haply the last may be better than the first. Defame not people nor call them names. Ill indeed it is to earn an evil reputation after having believed."* (49:12).

*"O ye who believe, eschew too much suspicion; for some suspicion may do much harm. Spy not, nor backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of a dead brother? Surely you would loathe such an imputation. Be ever mindful of your duty to Allah. Surely, Allah is Oft-Returning with Compassion, and is Ever Merciful."* (49:13).

*"The true servants of the Gracious One are those who walk upon the earth in humility, and when they are accosted by the ignorant ones, their response is: Peace; who pass the hours of the night in prostration and standing before their Lord; who entreat: Lord, avert from us the punishment of hell. It is a heavy torment, and indeed it is an evil resort and dwelling place; who are neither extravagant nor niggardly in spending, but keep a balance between the two; who*

*call not on any god besides Allah, nor destroy a life that Allah has declared sacred, save for just cause, and commit not adultery, for whoso does that shall meet with the punishment of his sin, and his punishment will be intensified on the Day of Judgment and he will abide therein disgraced except for those who repent and believe and work righteousness whose evil deeds will Allah convert into good ones. Allah being Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful.” (25:64-71).*

*“They bear not false witness, and when they come to anything vain, pass on with dignity. When they are reminded of the Signs of their Lord, they do not contemplate them like one without hearing or sight. They implore: Lord, grant us of our spouses and our offsprings the delight of our eyes and make us a model for the righteous.” (25:73-75).*

Islam teaches that man has been created so that he should become a manifestation of divine attributes (51:57). The Holy Quran sets forth a rich exposition of divine attributes not even a small fraction of which is set forth in the scriptures of any other faith. A comprehension of the Divine is possible only through a comprehension of divine attributes.

Islam teaches that man can and should establish and maintain communion with God. Prayer is the principal and most effective means of establishing such communion. As the Holy Quran says:

*“When My servants enquire from thee concerning Me, O Prophet, tell them I am close. I respond to the call of the supplicant when he calls on Me. So should they respond to Me and have firm faith in Me, that they may be rightly guided.” (2:187).*

Islam has instituted a perfect system of individual and congregational prayer, and emphasizes the beneficence of constant remembrance of God. A western scholar has

observed that Islam makes Muslims deeply God-conscious. Five daily prayer services are prescribed, and Muslims are urged to occupy themselves with prayer during the latter part of the night. The call to prayer, the *Azan*, which issues forth five times daily, summoning the faithful to prayer, is another unique feature of Islam. In other faiths the call to divine worship is made by the ringing of bells, beating of drums, blowing of horns, or other mechanical devices. The *Azan* is called by a vibrant, melodious human voice, and its words strike directly at the heart, reminding the worshippers that they are being summoned to the presence of God.

*"God is greatest, God is greatest; God is greatest,  
God is greatest;*

*I bear witness that there is no god besides Allah, I  
bear witness that there is no god besides Allah;*

*I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of  
Allah, I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger  
of Allah;*

*Come to prayer, Come to prayer;*

*Come to prosperity, come to prosperity;*

*Allah is greatest, Allah is greatest; There is no god  
besides Allah."*

Since the time of the Holy Prophet, this Call, in these exact terms has, in ever widening circles, resounded around the globe, five times each day, summoning the faithful to the worship of the One True God.

The pattern of the services has continued throughout as determined by the Holy Prophet. It permits of individual supplication also, which satisfies the needs and yearnings of the soul of each participant.

Part of the spiritual discipline of Islam consists of fasting during the month of *Ramadhan*. Observation of the fast requires absolute abstention from food, drink, and marital intercourse, from the first flush of dawn till after sunset, the strict upholding of all moral and spiritual values at the highest level, and constant remembrance of God.

On the social side a levy of 2½ percent on the capital value of certain assets is imposed for the purpose of fostering the welfare of the community. The levy is called *Zakat* and its proceeds are utilized for the relief of the poor and the needy, for winning the hearts of new adherents to the faith, for procuring the freedom of slaves, providing relief for those burdened with debt, assisting those striving in the cause of Allah, providing facilities for travellers, and payment of stipends to those employed in connection with the collection and disbursement of the levy (4:60). Islam was thus the very first Welfare State in human history.

The first house established for the benefit of all mankind is the one at Mecca, abounding in blessings and a means of guidance for all peoples (3:97). Pilgrimage to the House is a duty laid upon people which they owe to Allah, those of them who can afford the journey thither (3:98). The annual Pilgrimage to the House of Allah draws the Muslims together at Mecca from the ends of the earth. It is the World Assembly of Islam gathered in spiritual fellowship for the glorification of God and the promotion of human welfare. The rites of the Pilgrimage are carried out exactly as they were performed by the Holy Prophet. It is thus a highly emotional and deeply moving experience, which has no parallel in any other faith.

Islam requires that the motive and purpose inspiring every human activity whatsoever must be the winning of God's pleasure. Everything else must be subordinated to it. A workman should work honestly and diligently so that God may be pleased with him. Everyone pursuing an occupation or profession should carry out his duties to the best of his ability and to the utmost limit of his capacity so that he may win God's pleasure. A married couple should behave graciously and beneficently towards each other so that their union might win God's blessings. Parents

should exert themselves to the utmost to the beneficent upbringing of their children, so that they may grow up sincere and faithful servants of God and thus become a source of blessings for them. Children should be tender towards their parents and solicitous of their welfare and comfort, because that is pleasing to God. As an illustration of the spirit that Islam seeks to promote, attention may be drawn to the following:

*"Thy Lord has commanded: Ye worship none but Him ; and has enjoined benevolence towards parents. Should either or both of them attain old age in thy life-time, never say: Ugh; to them. Be humbly tender with them and pray: Lord have mercy on them, even as they nurtured me when I was little. Your Lord knows best that which is in your minds; if you will be righteous, then surely He is Most Forgiving towards those who turn constantly to Him. Render to the kinsman his due and the needy and the wayfarer, and squander not thy substance extravagantly, for the extravagant fall into evil company and misuse the bounties of their Lord. On occasions when thou must turn away from any of those who should be the objects of thy benevolence, while seeking thy Lord's mercy for which thou hopest, then speak kindly to them. Do not hold back altogether out of miserliness and render thyself blameworthy, nor spend without restraint and exhaust thy substance, thus becoming thyself an object of charity. Thy Lord enlarges His provisions for whom He wills, and straitens it for whom He wills. He is well-aware of all that relates to His servants and sees it all." (17:24-31).*

Such is Islam.

Our last word is: All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

## THE NATURE OF QURAN

By

A.F. Umar Khan

In the past several thousand years, mankind has developed from isolated communities into the modern, highly technical, interrelated global community we can now see on the horizon. It has been said that we live in a shrinking world. Jet travel has brought the four corners of the world within hours of each other. Satellites have made communication between any two points a matter of seconds. It is becoming increasingly imperative that man's relationships with fellow human beings keep pace with this new smallness. Isolation and segregation are no longer viable philosophies. We cannot consider ourselves as separate but equal islands of humanity. As citizens of this new global community, we must accept the fact (and deal with it) that our contacts have broadened. This means that we come into contact with a new diversification of humanity. We can no longer feel secure, locked in our own small communities which pride themselves on "sameness" and look down on those who are different. This means that centuries of propaganda which was directed at keeping unlike peoples apart must be ignored. It is time that the world wakes up to the reality that we have really been one people all along.

It is no coincidence that our world is shrinking. It was as predictable as tomorrow's sun rising in the East. Just as all humans start off in a fetal stage and mature through set stages into adulthood and old age, mankind has been slowly developing and maturing. In his earliest form, man was a loner, shunning the society of potentially dangerous larger groups. Social contacts were limited to a few trustworthy

individuals. Gradually, societies banded together for common production and security. Step by step societies banded together under common feudal leaders, and feudal leaders banded together under kings. Kings eventually formed great empires. Titles and roles have changed, but man has always been subconsciously working toward total unity.

Hand-in-hand with our social development, our perceived relationship with our Creator has expanded. Religious experience was highly localized and religion was spread only within a prescribed community and to near neighbors. Religion responded to local problems and was directly connected with cultural developments. God and mankind were viewed through a veil of cultural myopia, all things being relative to our own need to associate with similarly minded people. Our God has never changed, merely our perception of Him.

A factor of this restricted vision has always been that, in order to "convert" from one perceived line of prophetic tradition to another, one had to accept a wholesale change in culture. This was necessitated by the fact that religion and religious terminology have always been handcuffed to culture and human history. The converts have always been inspired to emulate the "original" enlightened culture, many times copying mannerisms and dress. In an effort to conform, new devotees are often lost to themselves in this totality of change. However, these are all physical changes which have nothing to do with the real spiritual changes which are expected to accompany a new position of "grace".

Now that we have reached the stage of global communication, we should be able to look back on prophetic tradition with a new perspective. We should be able to accept that early prophets were *part of a specific culture*. No society has been without its prophets or its prophetic tradition. The Judeo-Christian tradition is not unique in

any other way than its cultural perspective, Up to, and including, the Prophet Jesus, no prophet claimed universality of mission. For the first time in human history, the Holy Prophet Muhammad offered mankind a culmination of all previous prophetic traditions. In the message of Islam, there is no room for outdated concepts that allow any one culture a monopoly on divine favor or "grace". To accept Islam is not to reject or deny previous traditions; rather, acceptance acknowledges their validity.

If Islam can be said to have one guiding theology it would have to be that of Unity. God is One; man is one. When we start our prayers, we know that around the world, millions of other Muslims are doing likewise. Even though we may be separated by hundreds of miles from the nearest Muslim, when we close our prayer, we turn to both sides and extend blessings and peace to our unseen companions in prayer. Islam, more than any other religion, teaches mankind that we are truly one body, one house with many rooms, rooms that come in all sizes, shapes, colors, and purposes. Some rooms are airy and some have poor ventilation. All rooms have doors or doorways. If the house gets stuffy, one needs to open as many doors as possible to allow for the circulation of air. There are many times when opening one door is not sufficient; two or more doors must be opened to provide cross-ventilation. In such cases, it is best for people to open their doors simultaneously through a discipline of prayer. This is why there are set times when Muslims stop all what they are doing in order to open their spiritual doors in unison. This is also the reason why prayer in a Mosque or together in a friend's house can be preferable to individual prayer.

Thinking of mankind in terms of one grand house, each room having a door which opens into His presence, look at human religious evolution in terms of individual doors opening into the same Presence, but no one viewer ever



seeing the other's door; no one viewer ever recognizing the commonality of view. With this restriction of perception, prophecy (i.e., when God opens our door) and prophets were all specialized to deal with a given set of problems confronting a restricted number of people in a prescribed area at one specific time. To look with modern man's hindsight and see a similarity of message, a common thread of logic running through seemingly unrelated prophetic traditions should come as no surprise. However, we are still insisting on looking at religion through our culturally tinted lenses. We fall victim to that fallacy in logic which would prefer to prove that one prophet "stole" or "borrowed" his message from "our" line of transmission. We cannot fully perceive that, despite names and titles, there is and can be only one line of transmission, and similarities in content are reflections of this unity rather than a sign of improved communication which permitted plagiarism.

Another problem which has plagued all great religions has been the lack of an original, or autograph text, of their holy book. For example, the Hindus revere the Vedic Hymns, the Bhagavat Gita, and the Upanshidas, to name a few. But these texts were committed to writing after thousands of years of oral tradition. The Jewish Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses), when carefully examined by scholars using standard techniques of literary criticism, can be traced to the period of the Kings — several centuries after the time of Moses. The Christian Gospels have been dated beginning about 70 years after the death of Jesus, meaning that they were not written by contemporaries. This habit of oral traditions not being preserved as written texts until years or millenia later leaves too much room for inclusion of personal opinion, superstition, etc.

The Gospels, Pentateuch, Vedic Hymns, etc., were recorded at a time when communication, even from city to city, was poor and illiteracy common. People were easily

impressed by public heroes, and given even a few weeks for information to travel from city to city, exaggeration and local coloring were not uncommon. Imagine that these accounts had decades or centuries or millenia to be interpreted, expanded, illustrated, and recounted over and over before being finally committed to the written form. It makes it very difficult for one to separate the contradictions and exaggerations and arrive at an acceptably accurate edition. No two theologians will agree. Some will strongly support the inclusion of this or that passage, while another, equally competent theologian will just as strongly declare that such passages are pure fiction. Without an autograph, we are destined to such dispute and, finally, must make a personal decision based on "faith."

For this very reason, the Qur'an was immediately committed to writing and memory, not by one, but by several witnesses. The original language of the revelation was permanently recorded and has not been allowed to be altered or edited since. Being a Book for all time, we are allowed to interpret, make notes, etc. But the original text cannot change by so much as a diacritical mark. You can read a copy of the Quran which has come from a modern press and compare it with a museum manuscript over a thousand years old, and you will find no discrepancy between the two texts. This sort of quality control is vital in order to retain the integrity of the original wording. If changes were allowed, today's interpretation could become tomorrow's straight-jacket. Meanings and interpretations unthought of a hundred years ago would never be deduced from an edition which had been carefully doctored to suit one man's perception. Christianity can look to its own history for proof of that problem — the Council of Nicene (A.D. 325) was, perhaps, the blackest mark on Christian history. During that meeting, religious leaders met in council and decided what would be included in the "official"

Bible. Excluded texts were either destroyed or relegated to dark corners to be lost for ever to history. The final text was edited and groomed to fit current theology. Perceived contradictions were omitted and the final copy received the seal of approval for distribution to the masses. What treasures were lost? What meanings were changed? If that conference were to be held today the world would shudder. We have grown to accept this sort of editorial policy from the political press behind the Iron Curtain, but not from supposedly "free" sectors of our own community.

Islam is not free of conflict in interpretation, but the crucial difference is that no matter how extreme the viewpoint of an individual or community, no one dares to alter the text of the Holy Quran. Whatever differences of opinion occur must be based on information (or misinformation) gleaned through the original wording of the Holy Quran. There are some schools of thought within Islam which contend that certain parts of the text have been abrogated, but even they lack the right to edit. This dedication to the integrity of the original text guarantees the right of all of us, for now and into the future, to draw our conclusions from a complete and intact document rather than by beginning with an edition which has already been moulded to fit a viewpoint and then compounding those changes with new editing.

It may be asked: If the Holy Quran is a book for all people, then why was it revealed in Arabic? Why not? Arabic is, perhaps, the oldest spoken language in the world. There is a substantial amount of research to prove that it might be the oldest language ever spoken. By the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, Arabic was a developed language with set grammar rules. Furthermore, Arabic assimilates new terminology without necessarily eliminating the old words. A modern Arabic-speaking person can easily pick up the Holy Quran and not be bothered by obsolete

grammatical structures of archaic terminology. For that time period, the degree of standardization of spelling and grammar in Arabic was unique among spoken languages. If you have ever tried to read Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (written centuries after the Holy Quran) you can readily see the difficulty involved if the Holy Quran had been revealed in English, for instance. The same problems would hold true if the Holy Quran had been revealed in Latin (by then, almost a dead language), French, German, or any other language. In addition, Arabic can be a very expressive language, full of alliteration and onomatopoeia. The poetry and style of the Holy Quran is beyond equal. In fact, it was and is a challenge for anyone to equal it in literary quality. With all of this perfection of style and beauty of language it is important to note that the Holy Prophet Muhammad was illiterate when he received his first revelation.

The word "qur'an" means "recitation". The Holy Quran lends itself wonderfully to intonation by the human voice. It is intended that it be spoken. If we continue with the analogy of the door, begun earlier, the Holy Quran can be considered as the door's knob. By repeating the words of the Holy Quran, our individual doors can be made to open smoothly and wide. It can also be considered as the hinges, holding the door in place, and promising to man that the door can always be opened. It can, further, be seen to be the nails, holding the door together and providing it strength to withstand time and human problems without giving in to the strain.

Think of the prophecy as being a door that swings both ways. The Holy Quran states that God chooses whom He will to serve as prophets. The gift of prophecy is not necessarily sought; rather, throughout history, prophets have been groomed for their calling. When He chooses, and the individual has been properly prepared, God opens that

individual's door and begins two-way communication. That God has opened many such doors in many countries is an historical fact. That man has traditionally been skeptical of such two-way communication is also a fact. History has shown us that prophets have generally been persecuted and hated by all who were unable to accept their mission. But in every case God has protected His Messengers, and religious history is filled with evidence of men who overcame violent opposition and established God's ordinances.

Those people who have been chosen for this special position are worthy of our respect. The Holy Quran instructs us that, because of their special grooming and special relationship with God, that there can be no better example to follow. Yet, little is known of most prophets. Sure, we have bits and pieces of their reported messages, and there are brief biographical sketches of a few prophets. But, by and large, those aspects of a prophet's life which could serve as guidance for future generations has long ago been lost to history. For this very reason, those people who surrounded the Holy Prophet Muhammad were careful to record every detail that they could concerning his life.

There are basically two bodies of information concerning the life of the Prophet Muhammad: the Hadith and the Sunnah. The Hadith are a collection of accounts passed down through carefully recorded and researched chains of transmission. The accounts concern the day-to-day life of the Prophet Muhammad. The Sunnah are his recorded teaching and guidance which was passed on to those around him. These two bodies of information, when coupled with the Holy Quran (which is the eternal Word of God) form the basis of Islamic law.

In the West, Islamic law is very often pictured as harsh or barbaric. However, it is just and provided special rights to the accused long before this concept was thought of in the West. In each instance, the punishment is specifically

suited to the crime. But more important than the punitive portion of the law is the portion which instructs and guides. Islamic law provides for the relief of suffering due to hunger and poverty. Islamic law provides rights to women and orphans that are still being fought for in the West. Furthermore, the law is based on God's promise that He does not require from man that which he cannot do or more than he can bear. Thus the law provides a comprehensive system of managing our daily lives and for governing an entire society. Gradually, Western governments are learning to respect this legal system, and Muslim countries are seeking to reinstitute its jurisdiction. Islamic law is recognized in Holland and the United Kingdom has a strong internal movement for recognition in that country.

Again, the question could be asked: Why an Arab Prophet to bring the final Law? Again, why not? Apart from the language problem mentioned earlier, you might feel that there was no great need for the Prophet to have been an Arab. Had he been English or French, would you be more willing to accept his message? If your answer is "yes", then there are hundreds of thousands who would oppose you and say that he would have had to be born a Jew, or an African, or an Italian, before they would accept his message. The point is, there is no great advantage in claiming any nationality. Simply, he was the man for the world. Consequently, there is no magic in being an Arab Muslim as opposed to being a Chinese Muslim or an American Muslim. One's race does not entitle one to an extra measure of sanctity.

Many Muslim converts from around the world do change their name or take on an Arabic name to their given or family names. This is not a requirement or a prerequisite to acceptance by the rest of the Muslim community. There is no dishonor in having an American name. In fact, there are many Muslims in America who come from very old,

established families, and they feel strongly that their names carry a certain respect that they are not willing to drop in order to impress anyone with a "fancy" Arabic name. Others are simply proud that the name they carry was their father's and are content with it for that reason alone. These are all very valid positions. Many people who adopt a partial or completely new name do so because of feeling of rebirth in Islam, or because of the meanings attached to the names themselves. It is common for a Muslim to bear a name that reflects either a specific virtue or attribute which is desirable. Names often reflect our position as being servants of God (Abdullah) or refer to one of the many beautiful names of God given in the Holy Quran. Whatever the name, it is a purely individual matter and "John Doe" works just as well as "Abdullah."

The Holy Quran has been translated into almost every language in the world. You can read and study Islam without a working knowledge of Arabic. You very definitely do not have to know and recall any Arabic history or master any cultural idiosyncracies in order to be a good Muslim. There is no pressure to emulate an Arab in any manner. The original text of the Holy Quran remains in Arabic, and the basic prayers are in Arabic, but there is no need to feel that God only understands you if you speak like a Saudi Arabian. The more deeply that one gets involved in the study of the Holy Quran or other aspects of the religion, it may prove vital to gain a mastery of at least the basics of the Arabic language. But, how many people in the old-style Catholic Church remembered their latin lessons, and how many people, even yet, go into the detailed study that is required to become a preacher or a lay-leader? As with any religion, each person chooses his or her own level of involvement.

As stated above, Islam expects that we all open our own doors. There is no priesthood or clergy. Religion is totally a

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matter between the individual and God. Each Muslim is layman, priest, and missionary, all rolled into one. There is a class of religious "holy men" in the Muslim world, but Islam does not accord them any status as a Priest or Rabbi. Many of these men have spent whole lifetimes in study and prayer. They are recognized as men who have given their lives to Islam without question or remuneration. As in any group, there are those who merely fill the position because their father did, and their grandfather before them. In many very poor countries, this class of men is barely literate, for the most part, and have become a class of demigogues who would interpret Islam and herd people towards their own ends. In many cases, such individuals have unilaterally declared themselves above the law or have accorded themselves special status in society. It has often been a case of the blind leading the blind. When the bulk of the population is illiterate, a little knowledge in the wrong hands can be very dangerous.



## ISLAM AND JIHAD

By

Abdullah A. Odeh (Haifa, Israel)

[A Rebuttal to an Orientalist's Misinterpretation]

The primary significance of the word *Jihad* is evident from the meaning of its Arabic root *Jahd* or *juhd* which means "using or exerting one's utmost power, effort or ability in contending with an object of disapprobation". In a narrower sense it also means fighting but only when and if the sword is unsheathed against anyone. But unfortunately of all doctrines, tenets and principals of Islam, none has been so badly distorted and mutilated as the teaching about Jihad thus presenting Islam as a militant religion quite incapable of tolerating other faiths. *The Encyclopedia of Islam* defines *Jihad* as "a religious duty inculcated in the Quran on the followers of Muhammad to wage war upon those who do not accept the doctrine of Islam."

Verses from the Holy Quran show in the most emphatic terms that Islam discourages and condemns the use of force to spread its faith. Not even a single incident from the life of the Holy Prophet or his elected successors can be quoted which may lend the faintest support to the idea that Islam views with favor compelling people to accept the faith.

The sincere and selfless devotion to the Holy Prophet on the part of his followers to which history fails to produce a parallel alone constitutes a conclusive rebuttal of the charge that they were won over to Islam at the point of the sword. It is difficult to imagine a more foolish and baseless charge.

Interested readers may refer to the following Quranic verses enjoining *Jihad*: (25:53), (16:110), (29:8). These verses were revealed in Mecca when the Prophet was still being subjected to all sorts of persecution and privation and

surrounded by a few poor and oppressed individuals. The *Jihad* enjoined in the above verses is the *Jihad* of a much higher quality than fighting, killing others and being killed. It is rather waging war against sin and iniquity and against one's own low passions and base desires. It is this *Jihad* which is obligatory on every Muslim under all circumstances. These verses also constitute an effective answer both to those who believe that, because at Mecca the Muslims were weak, therefore they were enjoined to bear with patience all excesses perpetrated on them, but when at Medina they found that they could offer successful resistance and so proclaimed *Jihad*, and also to those who confine *Jihad* only to fighting with the sword.

But while Islam induces man to spare no pains or effort to achieve its pure ideals, it has never ceased to urge him to meet things as he finds them and not to ignore realities. And though Islam regards war as an abnormal and destructive activity, it has never lost sight of the fact that occasions arise in the life of nations and communities when to follow the will-o-the-wisp of peace amounts to national suicide and recourse to war is inevitable. "Resist not evil" is a principle which has never been acted upon even by those who are not tired of dilating and dwelling upon its imaginary and fancied beauties. Islam's principle is: Do not resist evil when non-resistance will lead to a moral regeneration of the evil doer and contribute to the cause of general peace; and resist it with all power and might when such is not the case.

The current view of *Jihad* which is nothing but violence and lawlessness is a foreign concept borrowed by some Muslims at a later stage. In the Middle Ages, religious wars were the order of the day. Christian warriors and Crusaders attacked the Muslim countries. At the same time they also attacked those European peoples who were holding back from Christianity, with the hope of gaining the pleasure of

God. It seems that some Muslims, smarting under the violence of these unprovoked attacks, lost their balance and started attacking the borders of other peoples and countries. Thus developed the school of thought otherwise unknown in early Islam which maintains that there could possibly be no real peace and rapprochement between Muslims and non-Muslims. Accordingly, followers of this school, and I hope they no more exist, divided the whole world into two warring camps, *Dar-ul-Islam* (abode of peace) as against *Dar-ul-Harb* (seat of war), thus requiring Muslims to be in a continual state of war with others. Another class of Muslim jurists introduced a third division, *Dar-us-Sulh*, i.e., a country having made a treaty of peace with the Muslim state.

This foolish and insidious classification envisaging Islam as being all at war with the whole non-Muslim world finds no support in the teachings of the Holy Quran or *Hadith*. It is in open conflict with the views of some of the greatest leaders of religious thought in Islam.

In reality, for Muslims the whole world should be *Dar-ul-Salam* as long as war is not made on them and they are not deprived of their religious freedom.

Recently a learned scholar of Hebrew University, Dr. Moshe Sharon, in an article published in the *Jerusalem Post* (July 2, 1979) under the title *Al-Azhar Response*, expressed doubt and suspicion on the opinion issued by the religious scholars of *Al-Azhar*, the theological university in Cairo, supporting President Sadat's peace treaty with Israel. Dr. Sharon states that the *Al-Azhar* scholars based their opinion on the one and only precedent in early Islam, the peace treaty which Prophet Muhammad concluded with the leaders of Mecca in 628 A.D., known as the treaty of *Hudaybiyya*.

But strikingly enough, in attempting to analyze this treaty, Dr. Sharon states that "after a series of wars with

the Meccans, which ended more or less in a draw, Muhammad deemed it fit to negotiate with the Meccan leadership, at the end of which a treaty was signed. It was to be effective for no less than four years and no more than six years. Professor Sharon alleges that, two years later, the Prophet unilaterally broke the treaty and conquered Mecca. On the basis of this precedent, he continues, a legal maxim has been established in Islam to the effect that "reconciliation of the pagans and making peace with the people of the Book (Jews and Christians) is null and void when the Muslims have the power to fight them." He claims that the opinion of Al-Azhar scholars refers to this maxim and is based on the Prophet's precedent. In concluding his analysis, Dr. Sharon determines that "in the minds of Al-Azhar scholars, the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel is a temporary agreement which should be rendered void once better circumstances present themselves to the Muslims of Egypt for the renewal of war."

To what extent Dr. Sharon's allegations may affect and influence the process of peace, we prefer to leave that to the speculations of the political analysts. However, on the subject of the Islamic concept of *Jihad*, Dr. Sharon's views are obviously biased and distorted. To draw a reference from the behavior of the Prophet in judging the minds and intentions of the Al-Azhar scholars is even more shocking. The historic facts on *Hudaybiyya* have been most carefully presented in Islamic history, being an epoch-making event that constituted a great landmark in the early years of Islam.

The Prophet concluded the treaty with the Meccans not from a weak position or with the ulterior aim of deceiving the Meccans. He was decisively strong enough to enter Mecca. It was the Quraish, in fact, who tried to divert him at any cost from entering the city that year, in order to escape humiliation. For this reason they despatched their

envoy, Suhail, to the Muslim camp to negotiate the treaty. The Prophet, in his pursuit of peace, accepted even such terms which were regarded by his followers as rather humiliating. Even his great companion, Umar, went so far as to demonstrate his discomfort. But that treaty which seemed to the followers of the Holy Prophet as a diplomatic defeat soon proved to be a master-stroke of strategy. A special chapter (*Surah*) was revealed to the Prophet, blessing the occasion and defining it as a decisive and "clear victory". This being the condition, there can be no place for the charge that the Prophet was compelled to sign the treaty or sought to use it as a trick.

As to the charge that the Prophet unilaterally broke the treaty the moment he found himself strong enough to do so, is totally contrary to the historic facts. It was Quraish and their allies, Banu Bakr, who, in fact, violated the terms of the treaty by attacking Banu Khuzaa, a tribe in alliance with the Muslims. As acknowledgment of this violation, the Quraish, in fact, dispatched their chief Abu Sufyan to try to reconcile the rift, but it was too late.

Usually such views of the Western orientalists are inspired by the writings of Al-Waqidi, perhaps the most unreliable writer of the early Islamic history. However, even he states that the period for which this treaty was to be in effect was fixed as two years by mutual agreement. In that case, there is no question of the treaty violation anyway since the alleged events took place after its termination.

## CURRENT TOPICS AND TRENDS

### SCIENTISTS AND THE SHROUD OF TURIN:

The Shroud of Turin is believed by many to be the cloth in which Jesus was wrapped almost two thousand years ago. This 14 foot long shroud which has been kept in a Roman Catholic chapel for 400 years has become a subject of growing interest among the Christians.

Recently a team of scientists was given access to this historic cloth in order to determine if it is genuinely the shroud of Jesus or only a hoax. On October 12, 1979, their long-awaited report was released to the press. While these scientists did not come out conclusively to say that the image made on the cloth had been made by a real body, they admitted that their tests had not established that the cloth is a hoax.

The *New York Times* (October 13, 1979), under the title, "Scientists Fail to Solve Mystery of Shroud of Turin" reports:

"Every way we can think of for hoaxing it that would be credible, we can't prove," Dr. Raymond Rogers, a chemist at the Los Alamos Laboratory, said at a news conference.

And his colleague, Dr. Robert Dinegar, said that newly developed carbon dating technology could help establish the age of the shroud, something the scientists said they had not been able to do.

The shroud shows the front and back images of a crucified man, his elbows flexed and his hands crossed, with the imprints of nails through the wrists and feet and the right side of the chest pierced. The bearded face shows signs of bruises.

But the process that formed the image, which appears similar to that of a photographic negative, has not been determined.

Neither Heat nor Paint

Researchers say the image was not painted because it is not absorbed into the fibers of the cloth and was not produced by ordinary heat because such a process would have scorched the

fibers.

Previous examinations failed to determine what caused the image on the linen. Religious authorities have barred ultra-violet, carbon and X-ray tests on grounds such tests could damage the delicate fabric.

The Roman Catholic Church has taken no position on the shroud's authenticity but has encouraged its veneration.

The authorities in Turin gave the scientists permission to examine the shroud after a rare public display of the cloth in 1978. The scientists had 96 hours to make their tests, with only members of the Italian scientific community and representatives of the Catholic Church present.

The testing took place in the Palace of Savoy next to a chapel built in 1694 to house the shroud, which is under the guardianship of the Archbishop of Turin.

The shroud has been displayed publicly only five times — in 1898, 1931, 1933, 1973 for a television audience only, and in 1978.

Otherwise it is kept folded, wrapped in red silk, inside a silver box in the chapel.

### **SOME OBSERVATIONS BY WESTERN HISTORIANS:**

H. G. Wells in his *Outline of the History of the World* says:

“Arabia suddenly became a garden of fine men, and this band of some 500 odd people was the kernel of this garden to whom working and suffering in the path of Allah in all humility and with full contentment was the breath of life.

“It was the miracle of all times how from out of the unlettered, dark desolate desert there sprouted forth outstanding personalities, leaders for every walk of life:

“(a) Successors who, against tremendous odds weathered the storms of difficulties and disturbances raised from different quarters after the Prophet's demise, and preserved and consolidated the tenor of life lived and preached by their beloved chief and master, and

transmitted it for posterity in book form and in actual practice, to all the countries around them;

“(b) just and sagacious administrators who could control, coordinate and dynamise territories covering many millions of square miles and people by diverse races with different tongues, and make them feel better governed than before, and become the beloved of them;

“(c) Military commanders of fine allround calibre who could defend their newly formed spiritual nationhood against disgruntled elements within and without, and be ready for almost simultaneous action in different far flung sectors, in the north, west and east, with different unaccustomed terrain, and different peoples, each a hundred times stronger in population and equipment.”

Writing about the Muslim military, Will Durant in his *Story of Civilization* (The Age of Faith, page 188), says:

“The Muslim leaders were passionate disciples of Muhammad, prayed even more than they fought, and in time inspired their followers with a fanaticism that accepted death in a holy war as an open sesame to paradise....

“The Arab troops were more rigorously disciplined and more ably led; they were inured to hardship and could fight on empty stomachs. But they were not barbarians.

“Be just” ran Abu Bakr’s proclamation, “be valiant; die rather than yield; be merciful; slay neither old men, nor women, nor children. Destroy no fruit trees, grain or cattle. Keep your word, even to your enemies. Molest not those religious persons who live retired from the world.”

“Pioneers of science and learning who were to send for centuries to come, dynamic ripples of light from Spain to Samarkand and from Samarkand across India to Malaysia, and to Europe.”



Will Durant calls this "the incredible energy of Islam" (*Age of Faith*, p. 135).

Sir Percy Sykes in his *History of Persia* referring to Muslims fighting the Byzantine and Iranian Empires at the same time, says: "It was sheer madness" for them to fight simultaneously two major powers of the world, "but the mad men won." H. G. Wells says they worked with "a faith that moves mountains."

Will Durant in his celebrated work *History of Civilization* (*Age of Faith*, p. 175) has said:

"If we judge greatness by influence, he (The Holy Prophet) was one of the giants of History. He undertook to raise the spiritual and moral level of a people harassed into barbarism by heat and foodless deserts, and he succeeded more completely than any other reformer (anywhere); seldom has any man fully realized his dream. When he began, Arabia was a desert flotsam of idolatrous tribes; when he died it was a nation, throbbing with spiritual fervor in the worship of the one unseen Creator of the world, and surging with dynamism which in less than half a century completely revolutionized the thought and lives of the bulk of the people of the central belt of the world from the Atlantic in the West to the Central Asia in the East. Normally speaking such an extensive enduring revolution in thought and lives within such a short time among such a large number and variety of peoples should have been impossible particularly in an age when there was no telegraph or telephone, no automobile or aeroplane and no medium of mass approach, but that it did incontrovertibly happen, adds to the items providing food for thought in this connection."

(Reproduced with thanks from the *Yaqeen International*, Karachi, Pakistan, November 7, 1978).

## HUMAN ELEMENT IN THE BIBLE

Dr. John C. Trever, one of the most outstanding authorities on the Bible and "the first American to identify and photograph the Dead Sea Scrolls" according to Jean Luce Lee of *The Christian Science Monitor* (April 9, 1979), has offered some thought-provoking suggestions as to how to understand the Bible.

Professor Trever, a noted Biblical scholar and author of several books, has been teaching college students for the last 30 years how to study the Bible. At present, he is associated with the School of Theology at Claremont in California, as director of the Dead Sea Scrolls project.

The *Monitor* correspondent Lee reports:

### Three Aspects Described

Many of the difficulties in understanding the Bible can be eliminated, Dr. Trever says, if we know the threefold nature of Scripture:

1. History. Historical events lay at the foundation of the Biblical message. Though the Bible was not intended to be a book of history, it cannot be isolated from history.

2. Interpretative text. Most of what we read in the Bible is the product of each writer's response in faith to historical events. It was Hebrew faith or Jewish faith or Christian faith, depending upon the period of writing. Biblical men, responding to events in faith, received revelation of their meaning. As their faith enlarged, understanding of God was gradually refined and expanded. It was not God who changed, but it was men's view of Him that changed.

3. Ultimate meaning. We must view Scripture from the standpoint of the highest level of revelation that we know and accept. For the Christian that level is faith in God as revealed in Jesus Christ."

We must recognize the human element as well as the divine in our Bible study. Dr. Trever explained. He proposed as a measurement, "Ask yourself the question, 'Is this passage consistent with the spirit of Jesus Christ?'"

### 'Six Sessions on Gospels'

Frequently he teaches a six-session course in which the class studies the four Gospels, noting that each depicts a different portrait of Jesus from each writer's perspective of faith. During the sixth session, it is Dr. Trever's portrait of the historical Jesus that is introduced.

But he goes further. It is during this last session that he leads each student in the class to visualize his own portrait of Christ Jesus.

Here he breaks in and remarks, "It is a marvel — Jesus spoke in Aramaic; translators wrote his words in Greek and Hebrew; and we now have his clear message in English."

Dr. Trever gave us (Hedy Glaettli, a photographer, was with me) a test to see if we could discern the "human" from the "divine" passages in the Scriptures.

He read Genesis 4:23-24, where Lamech said anyone who attacked him would be avenged 70-fold.

We said that Lamech did not really know God or express the spirit of Christ Jesus. In other words, we said that was "human" and not "divine".

Next came Amos 5:24, containing, "...let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an overflowing stream" (RSV). Here we said we recognized this as the love Christ Jesus lived.

We passed our test.

### Progressive Revelation ...

Dr. Trever moved on to the controversial question: Is the Bible God's word? He generalized thus:

One view says the Bible is the Word of God in the sense that it was fully and verbally inspired. This scholars call the "plenary, verbal inspiration of the Scripture."

Another view is the opposite; it says that that the Bible is no different from any other literature — it's a purely human book. It should be revered for its great antiquity and broad influence.

And then he sees a view between these two. This view recognizes the human elements, seeing God at work in the human situation. Thus there is a progressive revelation of God

throughout the Scriptures, but the reader must seek the divine Word behind the human words.

**This last approach is the one Dr. Trever says is the core of his Bible study.**



## Meeting Ground for Science and Religion

(continued from page 10)

is continuously leading us to understand the laws of Nature.

We find the following words in the welcoming address by the Chancellor of M.I.T., Dr. Paul E. Gray, further confirmation of the truth revealed in the Quran. He observed that the challenges of the modern world: "will require on our part an even greater consideration of human values and social priorities in the application of science and in the development of engineering solutions to critical problems." (*The New York Times*, July 29, 1979).

*Khalil Nasir*



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 SPAIN: Mission Ahmadiyya del Islam, Escoriaza 6, Villa Verda, Cruce, Madrid 21.  
 SWEDEN: Nasir Moske Islams Ahmadiyya Forsamling, Tolvskillingsgatan 1. S-414 82 Goteborg, Sverige.  
 SWITZERLAND: 323 Forchstrasse 8008, Zurich  
 UNITED KINGDOM: 16 Gressenhall Road, London S.W. 18 5QL